

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING, MARCH 1, 1977

THE FOLLOWING Q. AND A. IS EXCERPTED FROM THE MARCH 1
DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING:

Q: WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER ABOUT THE UGANDAN
SITUATION?

A: I DO NOT HAVE A GREAT DEAL. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO
KNOW?

Q: WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IF IT IS YOUR JUDGMENT THAT AMIN
HAS CALLED THE GAME OFF FOR GOOD, OR THAT HE MAY HAVE A
MEETING RESCHEDULED, AND WHETHER YOU HAVE LOOKED INTO
THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSISTING AMERICANS IN LEAVING UGANDA --
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SUCH QUESTIONS.

A: THE SECRETARY EXPRESSED, I THINK, SATISFACTION JUST
ABOUT AN HOUR AGO FOLLOWING HIS TESTIMONY ON THE HILL,
THAT APPARENTLY AMERICANS ARE NOW FREE TO LEAVE UGANDA IF
THEY WISH. WE HAVE HAD THIS INFORMATION, OF COURSE,
CONFIRMED TO US BY THE UGANDAN CHARGE HERE.

WE VIEW THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THIS EFFECT AS FURTHER REASSURANCES FROM PRESIDENT AMIN AS TO THE WELFARE OF AMERICANS IN UGANDA. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME AMERICANS-- AT LEAST ONE THAT I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT -- IN UGANDA HAVE LEFT.

Q: THAT WAS A TOURIST, THOUGH.

A: YES. THERE ARE TOURISTS AND PERSONS WHO WERE WORKING IN UGANDA. I HAVE SEEN ONE WIRE SERVICE REPORT TO THAT EFFECT SO FAR. YOU ASKED ABOUT A CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENT FOR EVACUATION. THERE WAS, AS REPORTED IN THE MEDIA LAST NIGHT, A CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENT FOR AN AIRCRAFT CHARTER. THESE ARRANGEMENTS ARE NO LONGER IN EFFECT IN LIGHT OF THE LATEST ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AMERICANS ARE FREE TO LEAVE.

Q: THIS WAS THE SWISS AIRLINE.

A: YES. WE ARE GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT ANY AMERICAN WISHING TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO IN A NORMAL MANNER. SO THIS CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENT NO LONGER IS IN EFFECT.

Q: ARE YOU ENCOURAGING THOSE AMERICANS TO LEAVE?

A: NO, I DO NOT THINK IT IS A QUESTION OF GIVING ANY ENCOURAGEMENT. OUR POSITION WITH REGARD TO AMERICANS UNCLASSIFIED

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REMAINING IN UGANDA WAS MADE QUITE CLEAR IN NOVEMBER 1973 WHEN WE WITHDREW OUR MISSION THERE, AND THAT REMAINS IN EFFECT.

Q: I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ANSWERED THE FIRST QUESTION, WHICH WAS, IS IT THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S JUDGMENT THAT PRESIDENT AMIN HAS GIVEN UP THE GAME OF TRYING TO ASSEMBLE AMERICANS REMAINING IN UGANDA FOR A MEETING?

A: ALL WE KNOW IS WHAT IS IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT CONFIRMED BY THE CHARGE, THAT HE HAS POSTPONED INDEFINITELY THIS MEETING.

Q: YOU DON'T EXPECT IT TO BE EVER SCHEDULED AGAIN, DO YOU?

A: I DO NOT HAVE ANY EXPECTATION ON THAT. I HAVE NO INDICATION TO THAT EFFECT. WE HAVE THIS ASSURANCE WITH REGARD TO THE ---

Q: DOES THE UNITED STATES PLAN TO SEND A DELEGATE OR OBSERVER OR REPRESENTATIVE IF THE MEETING IS RESCHEDULED?

A: THAT IS SPECULATIVE, I WOULD SAY. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD IT HAS BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.

Q: HAS THE DEPARTMENT DISBANDED THE WORKING GROUP?

A: I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER IT IS STILL IN EXISTENCE OR NOT. IT WAS, AS OF A COUPLE OF HOURS AGO -- I PRESUME IT IS STILL IN OPERATION.

Q: DOES THAT MEAN THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF AMERICANS IN UGANDA?

A: OUR CONCERN HAS EASED.
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Q: BUT YOU ARE STILL SAYING THAT THEY SHOULD BE GUIDED BY THE FACT THAT WE WITHDREW OUR DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN '73 IN TERMS OF---

A: THE U.S. GOVERNMENT POSITION REGARDING THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IN UGANDA WAS MADE QUITE CLEAR IN 1973 AND THAT HAS NOT CHANGED.

Q: WASN'T IT THAT YOU URGED THEM TO LEAVE AT THAT TIME?

A: YES, WE DID, AT THAT TIME.

Q: AND THAT REMAINS IN FORCE. ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SAID?

A: WE ARE NOT ISSUING ANY FURTHER ADVICE ON THE SUBJECT, BUT I THINK IT IS QUITE CLEAR WHAT OUR ATTITUDE IS TOWARD RESIDENCE THERE.

Q: BASED ON WHAT YOU SAID, CAN ONE CONCLUDE THAT THE U.S. CONSIDERS THE INCIDENT AS CLOSED?

A: THIS IS JUST A FEW HOURS AFTER ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT OF THE MEETING ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT AMIN, AND I AM NOT GOING TO PRONOUNCE ON OPEN-CLOSED, END-BEGINNING, WHAT HAVE YOU. LET'S LEAVE IT JUST THE WAY I HAVE DESCRIBED IT.

Q: ARE YOU PREPARED NOW TO GIVE US THE DETAILS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN WHICH WAS MOUNTED BY THIS GOVERNMENT

TO GET OUR FRIENDS TO LOBBY ON OUR BEHALF WITH IDI AMIN?

A: I AM NOT PREPARED TO GO INTO ANY KIND OF DETAIL ON WHAT WE HAVE DONE.

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Q: HOW MANY COUNTRIES WERE APPROACHED AND ASKED TO TRY TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE?

A: I DO NOT KNOW. I HAVE NO IDEA.

Q: CAN WE ASSUME -- PERHAPS ASSUME IS THE WRONG WORD -- AS A RESULT OF THIS EXPERIENCE, HAS THE ADMINISTRATION, OR AT LEAST THE PART OF IT YOU SPEAK FOR, RECONSIDERED PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT UGANDA'S ACTIONS ARE DISGUSTING TO THE CIVILIZED WORLD AND THAT HORRIBLE MURDERS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED THERE? IF YOU WANT ME TO EXPAND MY QUESTION, I WILL.

A: I AM NOT ABOUT TO GO BACK AND CORRECT THE RECORD OR EXPRESS ANY KIND OF EXPECTATION REGARDING FUTURE STATEMENTS ON ANY SUBJECT. I AM NOT GOING TO TAKE YOUR QUESTION IN THE SENSE THAT YOU POSE IT.

Q: WELL, LET ME TRY IT IN THIS SENSE. THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER OFFICIALS MADE SOME VERY STRONG COMMENTS ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON IN UGANDA. AND SUBSEQUENTLY, THE PRESIDENT OF UGANDA SUMMONED ALL THE AMERICANS THERE TO A MEETING, AND IT CAUSED EXTREME CONCERN.

IT ALSO SEEMED TO CAUSE A CESSATION OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS REGARDING THE WAY UGANDA CONDUCTS ITSELF. IT SEEMS A LESSON HAS BEEN LEARNED. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT, OR DO YOU THINK THAT WE WILL PROCEED THE WAY WE HAVE IN THE PAST IN OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT UGANDA?

A: I THINK WE WILL PROCEED THE WAY THE ADMINISTRATION HAS STATED IT WILL PROCEED; NAMELY, MAKING STATEMENTS WHEN IT FEELS APPROPRIATE, SPEAKING OUT AS APPROPRIATE, AND I DO NOT THINK IT IS A QUESTION OF LEARNING LESSONS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. I WOULD NOT WANT TO ACCEPT THE PREMISE OF YOUR QUESTION.

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Q: IF YOU ARE GOING TO DO THAT, THEN WHY IS IT, IF YOU ARE GOING TO CONTINUE, AND THE PRESIDENT IS GOING TO CONTINUE, -- THERE ARE OTHER BISHOPS THAT MAY BE MURDERED,

THERE ARE SEVERAL OF THEM THERE -- EIGHTEEN OF THEM SIGNED A LETTER PROTESTING CONDITIONS, AND THERE MAY BE A BISHOP MURDERED TOMORROW.

NOW THE QUESTION IS: THE PRESIDENT HAS SPOKEN OUT. WHY IS IT THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL NOT RENEW AND ACCENTUATE THE URGING OF THE AMERICANS TO LEAVE?

OR DO YOU WANT TO HAVE THIS GAME GO ON -- TO BE REPEATED?

A: I THINK I HAVE SAID, REALLY, ALL I WANT TO SAY WITH REGARD TO HOW WE VIEW THE SITUATION IN UGANDA AT THIS TIME.

Q: CAN YOU CONFIRM NOW THAT IT WAS THE INTENTION OF STATE DEPARTMENT, LAST NIGHT, TO ANNOUNCE THAT AN AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC OBSERVER WOULD BE SENT TO THE MEETING, AT A TIME WHEN YOU STILL THOUGHT THE MEETING WAS ON?

A: NO, I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO CONFIRM THAT. I WILL STICK WITH WHAT WE SAID YESTERDAY, NAMELY THAT IT

WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION AND NO DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED. THEREFORE, WE COULD MAKE NO ANNOUNCEMENT ON IT. I WILL JUST STICK PRECISELY WITH THAT.

Q: YOU SAID BEFORE THAT THE CHARGE CAME IN AND SAID THAT THE MEETING HAS BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.

A: YES. WE SOUGHT CONFIRMATION OF THE RADIO REPORTS, UNCLASSIFIED

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ASKED HIM TO COME IN --

Q: WAS THAT LAST NIGHT?

A: -- AND PROVIDED THIS CONFIRMATION YESTERDAY EVENING -- I BELIEVE IT WAS SOMETIME AFTER 5 O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON --

Q: WHOM DID HE SEE, PLEASE?

A: I DO NOT KNOW WHO HE SAW.

Q: CAN YOU FIND OUT?

A: I WILL TRY TO FIND OUT, YES.

Q: HAS HE BEEN IN AGAIN TODAY? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY
FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS?

A: I DO NOT KNOW OF ANY VISIT BY THE CHARGE HERE TODAY.

Q: HAVE YOU BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM OR TALKED TO HIM?

A: I DO NOT KNOW.

Q: NOW WAIT. YOU STARTED OFF SAYING HE CONFIRMED THAT
AMERICANS WERE FREE TO LEAVE; AT THE TIME HE CAME INTO
THE DEPARTMENT YESTERDAY, THERE WAS NO SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT
OUT OF KAMPALA, AND NO SUCH INFORMATION.

THEREFORE, YOU MUST HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM
SINCE THEN, IF YOUR ORIGINAL STATEMENT HOLDS TRUE.

A: THE MEETING LAST NIGHT WITH THE UGANDAN CHARGE GAVE
US CONFIRMATION OF RADIO REPORTS THAT THE MEETING WAS
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POSTPONED INDEFINITELY. THE CHARGE HAS SINCE PROVIDED
THIS CONFIRMATION, AS WELL AS CONFIRMATION THAT AMERICANS
ARE FREE TO LEAVE.

SO THAT MUST HAVE BEEN AFTER THE MEETING THAT I AM
REFERRING TO, LAST NIGHT.

Q: SO YOU HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM THIS MORNING, IN
OTHER WORDS.

A: EITHER LATER LAST NIGHT, OR THIS MORNING. YES.

Q: YOU DON'T KNOW IN WHAT FORM?

A: I DON'T KNOW.

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Message Attributes

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